

1881 Bush Street
San Francisco, California
August 5, 1961

Reverend Reirin Yamada
c/o RAFU ZENSHUJI-BETSUIN
123 South Hewitt Street
Los Angeles, California

Dear Reverend Yamada:

We, the meditation group at Sokoji under Reverend Suzuki, have decided to establish a study center for laymen here in San Francisco, California. This center will be founded primarily for the purpose of practicing meditation, studying Buddhism in general and emphasizing Dogen's original Zen in particular.

We are searching for the pure and original Zen, which is universal in its concept. It must be suited to the American people, meet their life situations and thereby, it will flourish on American soil. This Zen can neither be over-ritualistic nor lack intellectual stimulation.

Affiliation with the Sotoshu of Japan is desirable and necessary, since we will look to it for spiritual guidance.

We realize that Westerners meeting with Zen meditation for the first time will be confronted with many problems. This center will provide a means to understand those problems, giving insight into their nature and origin and the way to ultimate freedom.

We also realize that the way of Zen is through each individual's effort, thereby making right understanding and right practice essential.

We believe that the proper approach to Zen in the West is "in the market place" as subscribed by Huang Po; therefore, the center's activities must be so directed. It will try to prepare people to live a poetic life in the social conditions as they exist, not by negating the life situation but rather bringing out its true nature and purpose.

During your last visit here, you spoke of a Zen Gakuin for Japanese and American priests and suggested that our group would be known as supporters of this. We hope that in the

near future, the center will be financially able to help with the support of the Zen Gakuin; however, our immediate problem is the founding of a study center.

A tree must have roots before the branches and leaves can appear.

As the center grows in members and vitality, it could and would help support such an institute. We hope that in the immediate future the center will be able to support an assistant priest at Sokoji to aid Reverend Suzuki in our heavy training schedule. This priest could be a forerunner of the Zen Gakuin.

Accompanying this letter are the proposed constitution and the initial program of activities of the center for your consideration.

In order to form this center we must incorporate under the California State Law. Before we can incorporate, we must send a letter to Sacramento enclosing the proposed name and outline of constitution for the organization. We are presently raising the money for this purpose.

The name "Zen Center" has been chosen for its simplicity, symbolic inference and sound. It can easily be found in the telephone directory under Zen, eliminating the difficulty we have all met when initially looking for Sokoji. We believe that the name should contain the word Zen and denote a place of study in English.

If you feel that the name is too brief, it could be lengthened to "Zen Buddhist Center", "Zen Buddhist Study Center" or simply "Zen Study Center". We await your concurrence with this name before writing to the Secretary of the State of California.

Soon after incorporating, we will be faced with the problem of facilities to house our activities. We plan to begin the center here at Sokoji and we hope to receive permission from the members to improve the Meditation Hall so that it will express in simple elegance an atmosphere of austerity, spaciousness and the understated beauty for which Zen is most noted.

We feel that this improvement is very important, as it is one of the most vital means of increasing membership. For each person making their initial visit to the improved Meditation Hall, it will be a visible expression of the practice of Zen.

Please forgive us for the length of this letter; it was somehow impossible to make it any briefer. We feel very close to you, and therefore, in our humble way, wanted to express the hopes

and ideas concerning this group's part in making Zen a living and vital contributing factor to the American way of life.

We send our kindest thoughts and blessings with this letter and hope that you will soon have time to pay us another visit here in San Francisco.

Until then, we anxiously await your answer and thoughts concerning our intentions. We remain,

Respectfully yours,